

One year of  
COVID-19

Long hauler  
reflects

Administrator  
departs

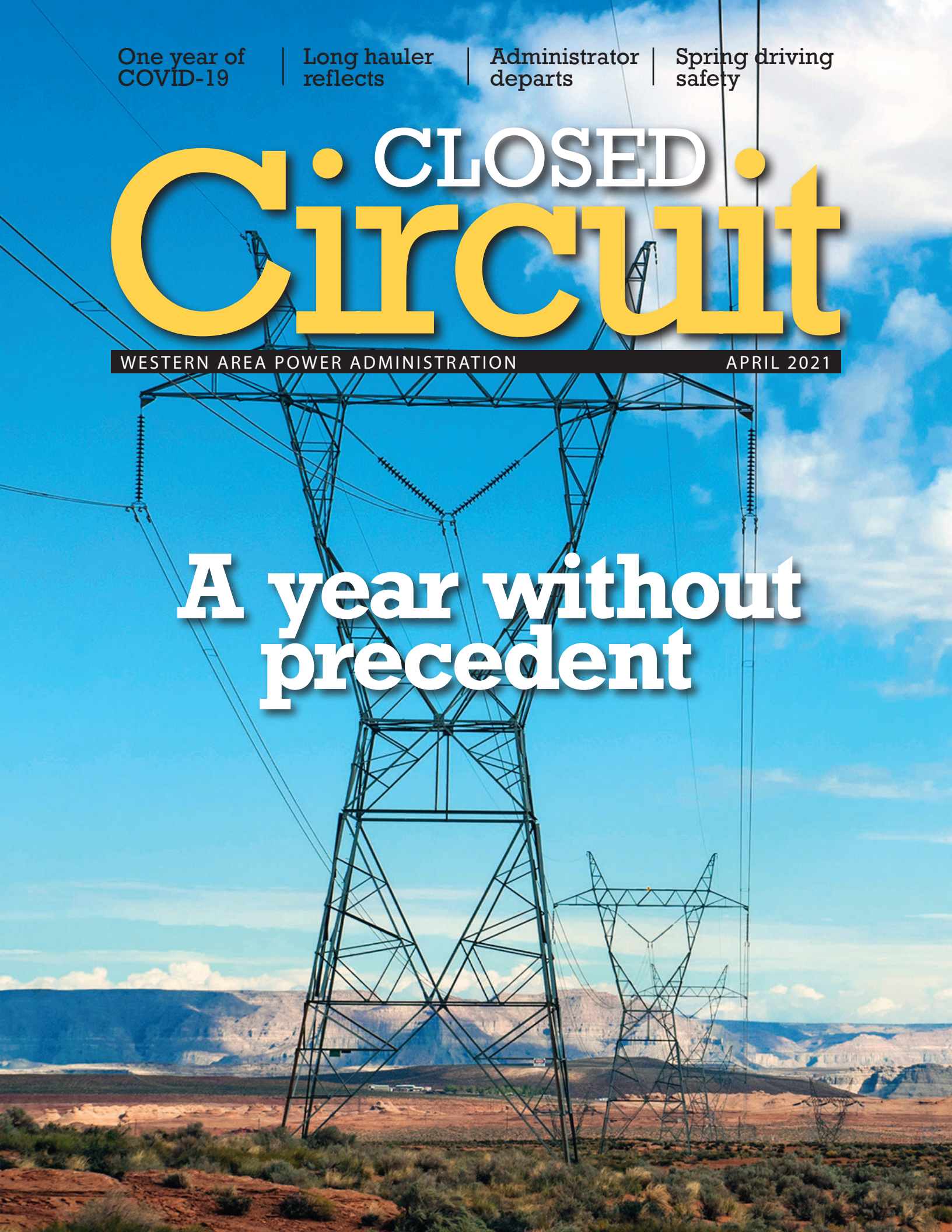
Spring driving  
safety

# • CLOSED • **Circuit**

WESTERN AREA POWER ADMINISTRATION

APRIL 2021

## A year without precedent







# CLOSED Circuit

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# Farewell from Mark A. Gabriel

**M**arch 12 was my final day as administrator of WAPA. After nearly eight years at the helm of WAPA and as one of its longest serving CEOs, it is time for a change.

This has been the best position of my career, and I will miss serving you, our customers and the nation. I want to thank all of you for the incredible journey we have been on together.

In making this decision, I have been reflecting on everything WAPA has done in collaboration with customers. We created *Strategic Roadmap 2024*, allowing us to lead the industry in many large and small ways. Together, we have refined safety and fall-protection practices; refreshed our core values, mission and vision statements; and developed a best-in-class asset management program. We have done so much that it is impossible to list it all.

I am comfortable leaving now because of the outstanding efforts we have made to improve WAPA's culture, move the needle on inclusion and diversity and work together as a team. Our incredible staff has made this possible.

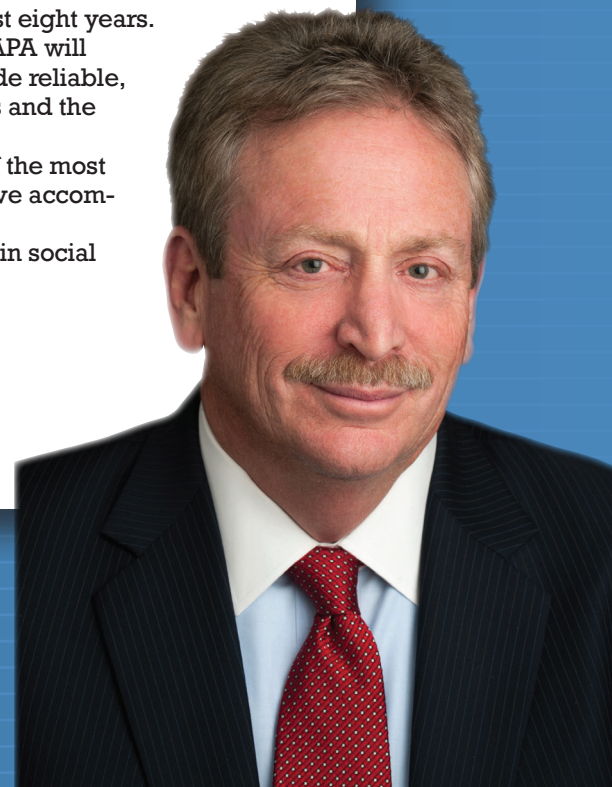
I credit the inventiveness of our people with the creation of unified 10-year plans and our award-winning transparency efforts known as The Source. We have also lowered or kept rates flat for more than 80% of our customers and maintained steady performance, executing 98% of our Operations and Maintenance budget as well as 96% of our capital budget through the most challenging environment in the past 100 years.

Interim Administrator and CEO **Tracey LeBeau** now takes the reins as the Department of Energy continues its search for a permanent replacement. Tracey is an exceptional and experienced manager with several years at WAPA. I have full confidence in her and the senior management team's abilities to maintain the progress we have made and continue to prepare WAPA for a dynamic energy frontier.

I want to thank all of you for your support during the past eight years. I have complete confidence that the amazing people at WAPA will continue to fulfill the organization's mission to safely provide reliable, cost-based hydropower and transmission to our customers and the communities we serve.

Deciding to leave the greatest job of my career is one of the most difficult decisions of my life, and I am proud of what we have accomplished together.

So, for the final time: Stay safe, wash your hands, maintain social distance and wear your mask.



Watch Gabriel's farewell video message to employees  
at [youtube.com/watch?v=BWkTVGP1a1Q](https://youtube.com/watch?v=BWkTVGP1a1Q)



# Get to know WAPA's interim administrator

By Teresa Waugh





# F

## ollowing the March 12 departure of **Mark A. Gabriel**, **Tracey LeBeau** became WAPA's interim administrator and CEO. *Closed Circuit* welcomes LeBeau in her new capacity.

### **What is your most rewarding experience at WAPA thus far?**

The honor and opportunity to be the interim administrator and CEO for WAPA. I use "for" intentionally instead of "at," and all that it signifies.

It is certainly a unique time to step into this role. The continuing pandemic will require maintaining focus and planning to ensure employee health and safety, as well as continually sharpening our tools to aid in productivity for our largely remote employees and field crews.

We are also facing exciting opportunities to launch new partnerships while remaining resolute in our relationships with customers, stakeholders and the communities we serve. Continuing these pathways will be imperative and rewarding.

### **What is something most people do not know about you?**

I grew up and lived all over the United States. I went to Alameda High School, just down the street from WAPA Headquarters.

Even now when I'm in Lakewood, I will find an '80s station and reflect back on new wave mixtapes, hanging out at Southwest Mall and cruising my stick shift sedan down Alameda Parkway. Good times. And full-circle moments.

### **What are you reading right now? Do you have a favorite author?**

I'm a toggler. I tend to have a few books going at the same time, usually fiction but every now and then I may



sneak in an autobiography or something reality based.

I just started Stephen King's *The Institute*. I really enjoy the horror genre. I'm also reading *Doing Justice: A Prosecutor's Thoughts on Crime, Punishment, and the Rule of Law* by Preet Bharara. It's hard to pick a favorite author so I'll name two: Elizabeth Gilbert and Richard Russo.

### **What is your communication style? Is there anything employees should know up front?**

I really enjoy conversations and getting to know people's backgrounds, interests and ideas. I am a listener first.

As for taking in complex issues, I suspect it is my law background, but I have an appreciation for written briefs. Getting context and understanding authorities helps me organize my thinking as a starting place as I work through a business case.

I fully understand I just made my Office of General Counsel colleagues smile and my engineering colleagues probably frown. But, in fairness, I do genuinely admire a good transmission map and single-line diagram attachments.

### **Would you tell us about your current home coworkers?**

My husband is a golf-teaching professional, so he enjoys an outdoor, out-of-the-house workplace.

Last fall, we fostered a Siamese cat while the rescue found her forever home. When she left, the house seemed so quiet, so we recently adopted a teenage tortie cat and are thoroughly enjoying her occasional photobombing of my Teams meetings.

What would you say motivates or drives your success as a leader?

It's hard to pin down, but one thing that has definitely propelled my entire career is intellectual curiosity. It can get you to the cores of issues and ask all of the whys, and it naturally facilitates diversity of thought which, in my experience, can be its own benefit. □

*Note: Waugh is WAPA's chief public affairs officer.*

# One year later...

By Teresa Waugh



**I**t has been one year since the pandemic upended our lives. It feels like yesterday and it feels like a lifetime.

Either way, it is a great time to reflect and appreciate how far we have come.

WAPA employees are masters at operational crises. After all, we have been keeping the lights on for 40 million Americans for around 44 years. However, we used to be inexperienced at sustained crises such as the 2020 pandemic. Not anymore. We went to work and created policies that did not exist.

We collaborated. We analyzed and we adapted. We worked tirelessly, creating procedures and plans to keep our mission-essential employees safe.

For example, WAPA spearheaded the effort to allow those on the front lines to take vehicles directly from home to worksites. Plus, we practiced sequestering our dispatchers in Sierra Nevada, making us the only power marketing administration to practice such sequestration.

In many ways we became more efficient, even as we endured multiple hardships. Specifically, we became more efficient in terms of communication.

This past year tested the strength of WAPA's communication in ways it has never been tested. In Public

Affairs, we increased the number of opportunities to meet virtually as an organization and launched routine feedback mechanisms. Our partners in Information Technology ensured we were all set up to work in a virtual environment. Together, we continue to navigate and learn powerful online collaboration platforms.

I am proud to report that, for the most part, the organization's communication has proven as strong and resilient as the grid itself.

Of course, there is always room for improvement. In my capacity as WAPA's chief public affairs officer, I understand the challenges we face right now. That is why we have increased our WAPA-wide meetings, including virtual townhalls with live Q&A sessions.

I have worked with my staff and the Strategy Office to produce WAPA's organizationwide well-being surveys and follow up on any issues identified therein. Right now, they seem to indicate a desire for more frequent and brief communication sessions, increased need for plain language and

improved measurements and analysis of progress.

Thank you for your candor and for sharing your thoughts about the issues you face. The input allows us to address those issues and, with my team as well as the Integrated Communications Group, to improve the communication experience throughout WAPA. The improvements we make today can make us a stronger organization into the future, long after the pandemic is a distant memory.

This is an unprecedented situation, and all of us have found ourselves challenged in ways we never could have expected. In spite of this, we have succeeded and continue to succeed every day.

I cannot thank you enough for upholding WAPA's dedication to strong and consistent communication between employees, to customers and with each other.

Do not hesitate to share with me your lessons learned. I would love to hear them. □

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*Note: Waugh is WAPA's chief public affairs officer.*





# Employees reflect on a year without precedent

By Leah Wilson

**I**n March 2020, an email was sent WAPA-wide that few employees were expecting: WAPA was transitioning to a maximum telework stance, effective immediately. COVID-19 was – and more than a year later remains – a constantly evolving situation, so there were of course many questions, not all of which had definitive answers.

How long would employees be out of the office? Was it possible for everyone to telework? Who would be allowed at their duty stations? What precautions would be taken for those who would continue to work in the office or in the field? The uncertainty impacted WAPA employees in many different ways.

WAPA stood up its Multiregional Coordination Group and regional Emergency Operations Centers as well as established a number of key working groups to keep a close eye on developments from the very beginning. This meant that employees received regular updates and revised policies regarding telework, travel, visitors, authorized employees in workspaces, safety and social distancing.

## Adapting to change

“The suddenness of the change to remote work made everyone quickly develop electronic workflows,” said Records and Information Management Program Manager **Christopher Magee**. “On top of all the workforce issues, the significant issues of social justice permeated all of our lives. This caused tremendous stress and concern

that impacted people’s abilities to work.”

The quick change led many employees to think outside the box and transform the way their work had been accomplished in the past.

Electric Power Training Center Manager **Kyle Conroy** explained, “The EPTC suspended in-person training in March and the team has worked hard to develop and integrate a low-cost alternative via a Virtual Instructor-Led Training program.”

Conroy’s team adapted through the technology available to them, quickly learned how to use the WebEx Training module, developed a new series of courses to deliver to WAPA and EPTC partners and has continued to deliver this training throughout the year.

## Sequestration

By the end of March, regions began developing sequestration plans. In April, volunteer employees ran sequestration exercises to identify any issues or shortcomings.

“The pandemic struck after only a few weeks of beginning my role as the acting procurement manager at Rocky Mountain,” said Supervisory





Contract Specialist **Leslie Sayre**. “It was important for the region to be able to determine a path forward in which to maintain mission-essential functions and protection of specialized personnel.”

Sayre explained that sequestration is when an employee with no confirmed exposure risk and no symptoms of COVID-19 is proactively isolated on site for an extended period so that they may continue performing their job function.

“In this case, the control room personnel needed to be kept safe, as they are considered mission-essential personnel and unable to perform their duties remotely,” she continued. “This meant having to figure out a way to sequester these employees if the time came.”

No movement beyond the designated sequestration area and no interpersonal contact with individuals outside of the defined area for the designated period are allowed during sequestration.

“Many options were tossed around to meet this need but, ultimately, renting recreational vehicles was determined to be the safest and most cost-effective way to do this,” said Sayre. “A team was put together, led by **Cansu Teano** who continuously updated senior management.”

This team was made up of various personnel throughout WAPA and had to determine how many RVs would be needed, how they would be acquired, how long they would be needed and other considerations, such as linens, kitchenware and blackwater waste disposal.

“Ultimately, the RVs were kept onsite for approximately three months and, thankfully, they were never needed,” said Sayre.

“Getting RVs, getting food memos signed and figuring out potential pay for sequestered employees,” were top priorities in the sequestration planning efforts, said Supervisory Contract Specialist **Jerad Gaines**.

### Overcoming challenges

A year of COVID-19 came with challenges and tribulations. As the pandemic unfolded, many WAPA employees adjusted to separating working areas from living areas while teleworking.

On top of personal struggles, WAPA employees made it their mission to check in with their own teams during this difficult time.

“Dedicating the time to check in and see how colleagues were doing, whether related to new work processes, COVID-19 impacts or social justice issues, as well as embracing flexibility, empathy and openness,” was an obstacle in itself, according to Magee.

“You can’t overcommunicate,” he said. “A unique challenge is building comradery and celebrating successes and achievements in meaningful ways.”

A year of COVID-19 has brought more than just challenges, however; it’s also brought an opportunity to learn from the experience. Some employees have even adjusted to the point that they are able to exceed their pre-pandemic productivity.

“I have found that I am more efficient working from home and get more

done,” said Power System Dispatcher Trainer **Rick Krumpeck**.

Conroy similarly said that transferring from in-person to online learning via WebEx represents a positive innovation for WAPA.

“It generates durable, long-term benefits to the EPTC, WAPA and our business partners and customers,” he said.

For those who are still finding it difficult to work away from the office, Lead Management and Program Analyst **Laura Dawson** has advice.

“There are best practices on working from home that are worthy of a revisit from time to time,” she said. “The one-year mark of COVID is as good a milestone as any to check in with yourself. What’s working for you? What’s not working for you? What are you willing to change to be more comfortable? In reflecting a little on this myself, I’ve set a couple goals to help me manage my stress level.”

Many viewed the pandemic as a time to slow down and reevaluate work-life balance, some learned to bake banana bread and others used it as a time to reconnect with colleagues or loved ones.

The personal experiences of each employee are bound to differ in significant ways, but WAPA has worked hard to maintain a safe, secure and sustainable work experience for all of its federal and contract employees.

In doing so, the organization has successfully kept the lights on for more than 40 million Americans during a full pandemic year. And counting. □

*Note: Wilson is an administrative analyst who works under the Cherokee Nation Strategic Programs contract.*



# Long hauler discusses one full year of COVID

**I**t's been more than one year since Financial Program Analyst **Lisa O'Brien** started feeling the symptoms of COVID-19.

For many who had contracted the virus that long ago, the worst would be behind them. For long haulers, however, the symptoms remain.

"Tens of thousands of people in the United States have lingering illness following COVID-19," says Dr. Anthony Komaroff, editor in chief of *Harvard Health Letter*. "We call them post-COVID 'long haulers.' Currently, the condition they are suffering from is known as 'long COVID,' although other names are being proposed."

Komaroff said that long haulers "continue to have bothersome symptoms three months after the onset of COVID-19 — even after tests no longer detect virus in their body."

For O'Brien, and for many others, "three months after the onset" is a distant memory. They continue to struggle and suffer to this day.



## The onset

"Before COVID, in 2019, I made it a goal to travel somewhere once per month, even if it was just for a week-end getaway," she said.

O'Brien was in her early 40s and lived an active lifestyle. She was taking no medications and had always been generally healthy. She enjoyed traveling and experimenting with new hobbies, such as Irish River dancing.

"I was trying to redefine who I was as a woman with grown kids," she said.

One of her planned activities was a trip to Hawaii in late February 2020. Booked in advance, O'Brien had no idea it would end up overlapping with the start of a pandemic. As her trip drew near, she started to hear about the virus, but went anyway.

"I didn't think it was that big a deal," she said. "At the time, before we really understood the danger, many people heard about it and dismissed it."

She started to feel ill March 11, 2020, just after she returned. The U.S. had not yet started restricting travel, and her flight had a layover at Los Angeles International Airport, which was later identified as a COVID-19 hot spot.

"I was having symptoms, but I chalked it up to jetlag," she said.

## Bad to worse

As COVID-19 was still not fully understood, what she was feeling didn't match up with what she was hearing about on the news.

"I never had a fever," she said. "I never lost my sense of taste or smell. The symptoms I had were not the symptoms we were told to watch out for."

Her initial symptoms were generally mild, but they eventually went further. Through the course of her infection she suffered from malaise, sore throat, fatigue, intestinal issues, chills, burning lungs, shortness of breath, intense body aches and severe fluctuations in heart rate. She also developed blood clots in her arm and lung.

Due to an early shortage of tests and criteria restrictions, she wasn't able to get tested for COVID-19 until beyond the timeframe that the virus would have still been active. The result

**I knew there were going to be others who would go through the same thing that I went through, not being believed, being dismissed by doctors and family members.**

was negative, leading doctors to later dismiss her concerns or misdiagnose her, even though early testing had accuracy rates as low as 60%.

For seven weeks, those symptoms ebbed and flowed. Then, during week eight, her symptoms got substantially worse.

"My autonomic nervous system just went haywire," she said. "I started having internal vibrations that I could feel through my whole body. I started having erratic heart rates, anywhere from 30 to 221 beats per minute."

In addition to all of this, O'Brien started to develop cognitive issues.

"I began experiencing short-term memory loss, having trouble with word recall," she said. "I could explain the word I was looking for, but I couldn't get it to come to mind. It definitely affected my brain."

She also developed mast cell activation syndrome, or MCAS.

"Mast cells are responsible for allergic reactions," she explained. "Hives or anaphylactic episodes, that's the mast cells at work. Post-COVID, individuals are ending up with MCAS. They are developing allergies they never had before, to fruits they've eaten their whole lives or to perfumes they've always used. It's crazy."

## Finding support

As time passed, O'Brien ended up feeling better in some ways, but continuing to struggle in others. Her heart rate began to calm down, but a year later she is still facing cognitive issues and brain fog. Previously physically active, O'Brien now finds herself drained from even small amounts of exertion.

"It's awful," she said. "I have insomnia and fatigue. It's not like I'm just tired; my body is not producing the energy that I need to function. I can sleep for hours and hours and still wake up and feel the fatigue because my body's not working like it should."

One fortunate development was that she did not have to endure this confusion and frustration alone; in June 2020, she started an online support group for long haulers in Utah. That group now has around 2,700 members.

"I was having such a hard time getting doctors here in Utah to believe me and take my situation seriously," she said. "I knew there were going to be others who would go through the same thing that I went through, not being believed, being dismissed by doctors and family members. I wanted people to know that they were not alone. I wanted a place where we could share local resources. I also wanted to show Utah that this was going to be an issue."

O'Brien attempted to contact her state officials and representatives but did not feel heard by them.

"We had to be proactive and make a plan," she explained. "How do we focus on their long-term health and rehabilitate these people and get them back to their previous lives? In 2020, I probably went to 80 different doctor appointments. I saw we were going to overwhelm the healthcare system. There wasn't a lot of education about our situation. I wanted to show them, look, this is going to be a problem."

O'Brien and other members of the long hauler group exchanged information on doctors who could help them and offered emotional support to each other.

*continued on Page 10*

"The biggest blessing for having that group is knowing that you're not going through it alone," she said.

Seeing the success of the group, O'Brien next created COVID Advocators for Research and Education, or CARE.

### Affliction to activism

CARE is a non-profit with the intention of supporting research and educating the public on the long-term risks and effects of COVID-19. O'Brien hopes to educate patients who are going through it right now and may not know what to expect.

"I want the CARE website to be a single place you can go to find information, studies people have done and other resources," she said. "It's a work in progress. I plan to have it be kind of a Long Hauler 101. I want to upload every bit of information and resource that I've gathered over the past year."

Topics will include how to properly pace for exercise, diet suggestions and guidance for COVID-19 long haulers. She would also like to help others who are struggling professionally as a result of the pandemic.

She explained that having a resource could reduce some of the confusion people feel when their symptoms don't necessarily line up with the symptoms of others. She mentioned that some members of her group have lost their sense of smell, for instance.

"They can't taste their favorite food anymore," she said. "Every single thing they eat tastes like nothing. Or now their favorite foods smell putrid, like vomit or diesel oil. Others have had their sense of taste changed, so that some stuff doesn't taste right. Some people are dealing with profound fatigue, so much that their body feels like cement. Some people have lung issues. I dealt with autonomic nervous system dysfunction, also known as dysautonomia."

O'Brien understands the need for connection and support through difficult times such as these, and she makes an effort to provide that for as many sufferers as possible.

"We don't have a lot of answers," she said. "We don't know if we'll ever return to who we used to be. If



O'Brien has been an outspoken advocate for public education regarding COVID-19 long haulers.

the pandemic were to end tomorrow, most people would get to back to their normal lives, but I am not well enough to go back to my normal life."

O'Brien has also helped establish a number of treatment programs. In November 2020, she and other long haulers met with researchers at the University of Utah to discuss research efforts and the need for a post-COVID care clinic.

"The researchers are applying through the National Institutes of Health to participate in the Long COVID studies and a post-COVID care clinic should be open in June, which will take patients from all over the country and have a telehealth option," she said. "This is something we've pushed for since August 2020."

She also worked with the staff of a local medical non-profit, who are experts in post-viral illnesses on their research efforts and coordinated patient participation for their own post-COVID care clinic.

"It launched in February and will take on 100 patients," she said. "I was their very first patient."

Even through this work, the scope of her affliction is still being determined. At a recent appointment, they officially diagnosed her with postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome and orthostatic intolerance.

"I also meet all the criteria for myalgic encephalomyelitis, sometimes referred to as chronic fatigue syndrome but it involves so much more than just fatigue," she said. These diagnoses explain many of the issues with which she struggles and could help others who suffer as well. "These are potentially lifelong chronic illnesses for all of us, but the doctors at the clinic are optimistic about our recovery because

of the early intervention. Nobody can guarantee that, though."

### Keeping safe

The longer the pandemic continues, the more O'Brien encourages others to keep as safe and healthy as possible.

"I know that most of us are tired of hearing about COVID and tired of the pandemic, and that's totally understandable," she said. "But continue to do whatever you can to minimize your risk of getting this, because you don't want to risk ending up with the version of COVID that I ended up with. COVID can be life changing and there's no way to predict which version you will end up with."

She expressed her gratitude for the patience and understanding that WAPA has shown her.

"There were a couple of weeks when I could barely get out of bed," she said. "I've been really lucky that I have a very understanding team. If you have COVID, it's important to take time to take care of yourself, because if you don't it's just going to make you have to miss more work and prolong your recovery."

One small silver lining is the fact that O'Brien has been able to offer her support to – and receive support from – others in similar situations.

"I have connected with a lot of people on a personal level and made friends with them," she said. "And we will probably be friends for the rest of our lives now, because we've gone through this traumatic event together. We lost part of our lives together."

One thing that makes her happy is the thought that, at some point, these experiences could be far enough behind them that they will be able to gather in person.

"I keep telling everyone that one day I want to plan a Utah long hauler meetup when the pandemic is over, to meet in person and celebrate having this group of individuals that we can turn to and who can relate," she said. "I've talked to some of them about planning future trips together, doing some cycling races. We don't know if we will ever get better enough to do it, but it's nice to think about." □



# WAPA publishes masking policy



**O**n March 5, WAPA published its COVID-19 Masking Policy, applicable to all WAPA employees, government contractors and visitors.

“This policy better aligns with the president’s Executive Order on Protecting the Federal Workforce and Requiring Mask-Wearing and the Department of Energy’s COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan,” said then-Administrator and CEO **Mark A. Gabriel** in his announcement.

The policy took effect immediately and will remain a requirement until rescinded by WAPA’s administrator and chief executive officer.

The complete text of the policy follows.

If you have questions regarding this policy, reach out to your immediate supervisor or your regional safety manager:



- Safety and Occupational Health Director: **James Withers**
- Colorado River Storage Project Management Center: **Tim Duffy**
- Desert Southwest: **Jennifer Hultsch**
- Rocky Mountain: **Tim Duffy**
- Sierra Nevada: **Matthew Monroe**
- Upper Great Plains: **William Weekley**

## COVID-19 Masking Policy

**Masks must be worn in all WAPA buildings and in leased space, including any common areas or shared workspaces (e.g., open floorplan office space, cubicles, hallways, garages, conference rooms, or other workspaces) even when physically distanced. Individuals must wear a mask that covers the nose and mouth and is in accordance with current Occupational Safety and Health Administration and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance.**

Security Officers may direct individuals to lower or temporarily remove their mask to verify identity.

When on official duty at another site or location (e.g., customer, other government agencies etc.) and there is conflict between the WAPA and host site’s mask policy, the more stringent policy shall be followed.

The following exceptions to wearing a mask are approved:

1. While working in an outdoor area where social distancing of a least six feet is being actively maintained;
2. While working a load, scheduling, or other operations desk in control rooms where social distancing of

at least six feet is maintained and additional safety measures are in place;

3. While working alone in an office, substation control room, communication building, warehouse, with floor-to-ceiling walls and a closed door;
4. When job duties require wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) that a mask may inhibit, such as respiratory protection;
5. While operating a motor vehicle with no passengers; and
6. When eating and drinking with intermittent removal for a limited time at locations where six feet of social distancing can be maintained.

For individuals who have a medical or religious reason why they cannot wear masks, exemptions to the face mask policy will be considered in accordance with existing Equal Employment Opportunity Commission guidance. Federal employees will be required to go through the DOE reasonable accommodation process to seek an exemption. Contract employees should notify their contract supervisor who will coordinate with a WAPA Contracting Officer.

WAPA will stock a supply of masks for employees to wear while in the workplace if an employee does not have one available.

# Individual evolution is imperative

By Troy Steadman

**I**n a workplace as busy as WAPA's, it's easy to become too busy to focus on individual development. Projects arise, deadlines loom, fires converge and important things remain undone. One of those undone things is your individual evolution.

Most of us get a heavy dose of on-the-job learning, but there are some things that can only be uncovered, discovered and learned through developmental activities, such as assessments, trainings and group learning.

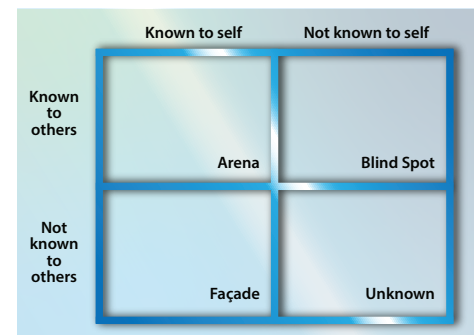
Make your individual evolution a priority through these seven simple steps.

## 1. Recognize an area for growth.

In 1955, Joseph Luft and Harrington Ingham developed a simple self-discovery model called the Johari Window, the name coming from part of both of their first names.

The simple model can be found with a quick internet search. The quadrant that is Not Known to Self and Known to Others is the "window" of focus for the purpose of recognizing growth.

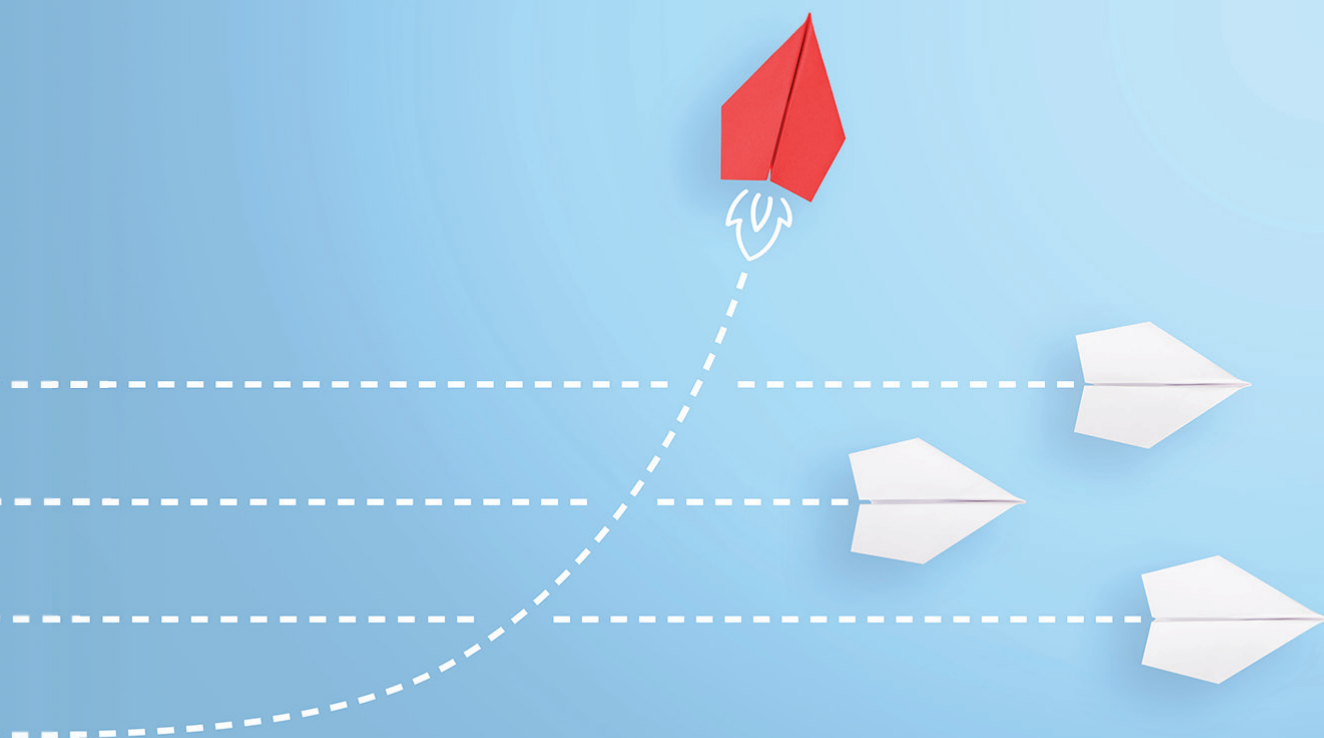
This quadrant is known as our blind spot. Said another way, "We don't know what we don't know." The obvious question to ask is, "How do we know what we don't know?"



## 2. Research ways to promote growth.

The answer to the question we just posed has quite a range including, but not limited to, taking assessments;





participating in training events; viewing leadership media; mentoring; asking a friend, coworker or boss; and even failing at something.

Many people may know what their preferred methods are, but if you are still unsure, you can find several free learning-style indicators online. Once you determine your preferred learning styles, seek activities that will promote learning through those methods.

### 3. Set goals.

It is commonly accepted that it can take anywhere from 18 to 250 days to break a bad habit. That's quite a range! It is dependent on how ingrained the habit is and how motivated someone is to change.

Interestingly enough, that is the same range to start a new habit. Setting goals is critical to that change. Instead of saying "someday I'll change," set a specific date on a calendar.

Setting short-term goals provides for early wins, which can provide motivation. Setting long-term goals provides a realistic target. Some people follow SMART when setting goals, making sure they are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound.

### 4. Make plans.

Goal setting and plan making are interconnected principles. What if you set a goal to lose 10 pounds in the next 30 days? Is this possible? Absolutely, but the specific plan you make is paramount to your success.

In this example, planning can include setting up a healthy eating plan and developing an exercise calendar. Making plans will help you achieve your goals.

### 5. Recruit an accountability partner.

Recruiting someone to hold you accountable is a key motivational technique. The reason is simple: We don't like letting others down.

Having someone help keep you on track also makes changing less difficult because you don't have to tackle it alone.

### 6. Be okay with failing on your path to success.

In her book *Wolfpack*, Olympic champion Abby Wambach has an entire chapter on turning failure into fuel.

When she was a rookie player on the women's World Cup team, she noticed a picture posted above the door that led to the field. The picture

was of the Norwegian National team celebrating a victory over Team USA. The next season, Team USA won. They used this picture as motivation to work and play harder, to fuel their success.

This principle applies to all of us. Think back to your most recent failure and your most recent success. Which experience did you learn more from? Which one will make you better moving forward?

### 7. Stick with it; it's a journey.

Remember, you're playing the long game. An anonymous motivational poem, *Don't Quit*, comes to mind:

*"Don't give up, though the pace seems slow;  
You might succeed with another blow."*

We know we truly only fail when we give up. Otherwise, success is just around the corner. □

*Note: Steadman is a Leadership Development Program manager. Brittanie Paquette contributed to this story.*

To stay informed of the latest Leadership Development opportunities, visit myWAPA, Programs, Leadership Development or contact [leadershipdevelopment@wapa.gov](mailto:leadershipdevelopment@wapa.gov)





An aerial photograph of a two-lane asphalt road winding through a dense, lush green forest. A small red car is visible on the road, positioned towards the left side of the frame. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

# Drive safely in the springtime

By Paul Robbins

**A**fter several months of alert winter driving, it is easy to let your guard down as warmer spring weather rolls around.





According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, most vehicle accidents take place during rainfall or on wet roadways. Consider the following tips to be better prepared for springtime wet-weather driving conditions.

### **Check tires and wiper blades**

Worn tire tread can lead to loss of traction and sliding. Checking tire tread depth is easy; all you need is a penny. Insert the penny into the tread with Lincoln's head upside down. If all of Lincoln's head is exposed, then it's time for new tires.

While you are at it, check your tire pressure and compare it to the recommended pounds per square inch listed on the tire sidewall. Continue to check your tires regularly throughout the year.

Windshield wiper blades can wear down during winter months. Now is a good time to replace the blades and fill the wiper fluid reservoir under the hood. Also, check the container for cracks, holes and leakage.

There are three major things to consider while driving in the rain or on wet surfaces, according to Nationwide Insurance: following distance, hydroplaning and potholes.

### **Follow at a safe distance**

Rear-end collisions account for approximately 40% of traffic accidents nationally, according to the NHTSA.

Normally, you can avoid rear-ending by using the "three-second rule" on dry roads; Nationwide suggests increasing this time to eight seconds when driving in the rain.

Measure the distance between your vehicle and the vehicle ahead by selecting a clearly visible marker, such as a sign or tree. When the vehicle in front of you passes the marker, make sure it takes no less than eight seconds for you to pass that same marker using a one-one-thousand, two-one-thousand count.

Other contributors to rear-end accidents are distraction and rushing. The solutions to these hazards are basic: Slow down and pay attention to the road.

### **Avoid hydroplaning**

Have you ever driven through standing water and felt your vehicle lift slightly, losing contact with the road? This is called "hydroplaning," and it can happen suddenly to the best of drivers.

When hydroplaning, a thin layer of water comes between the tires and the road and your vehicle loses traction. The three main contributors to hydroplaning are depth of water, vehicle speed and tire-tread depth.

To address these issues, check your tire-tread depth and inflation and adjust your driving speed to safely meet road conditions. Also, turn off

the cruise control and regulate speed manually.

If you do hydroplane, stay calm, ease your foot off the accelerator and don't slam on the brakes. If you slide, turn slightly into the direction of the slide until the tires regain traction.

### **Watch for potholes**

It is natural to want to hit the brakes when you hit a pothole, however hitting the brakes stops the tire, slamming it down and into the edge of the hole with more force.

If you instead release the brakes before or at impact, you will do less damage to your tires and suspension by letting the tire roll over the hole.

Avoiding potholes when possible is the best strategy.

### **Share the road**

Remember that there are more motorcycles, bicyclists and pedestrians on the road during warmer spring months. Be attentive and scan the roadway in front of you, check your mirrors regularly and check blind spots before changing lanes.

Finally, practice defensive driving, stay out of others' blind spots and make sure everyone wears a seatbelt.

Drive safely this spring and arrive alive. □

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*Note: Robbins is a technical writer who works under the Cherokee Nation Strategic Programs contract.*

### Gabriel testifies before Senate committee



On March 11, then-Administrator and CEO **Mark A. Gabriel** testified before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee on the subject of “Reliability, resiliency, and affordability of electric service.”

Gabriel was asked several questions about the value of hydropower, black start and the need for more hydropower and transmission.

“Looking forward, we anticipate investing \$1.3 billion in our system over the next decade to ensure reliability,” Gabriel said in his opening remarks. “Reliability is the confidence that the lights will turn on when we need them. Resilience is the ability to prevent, withstand and recover from disruptive threats and events.”

Read the complete oral and written testimonies at **wapa.gov, The Source, Presentations and Speeches**



### Gabriel featured on Heidrick & Struggles podcast

On Feb. 25, WAPA’s then-Administrator and CEO **Mark A. Gabriel** spoke with Ed Manfre of the Heidrick & Struggles podcast about the importance of leadership and culture as keys to enhanced business performance.

Gabriel discussed some of the activities and initiatives he has implemented with respect to leadership development, culture and innovation; shared some personal definitions of leadership and trust; and offered three pieces of advice for leaders looking to improve their company culture.

“My elevator pitch is very simple; it is three things,” Gabriel said in the interview. “Number one, listen. And I

mean really listen for what you are being told. The second thing is to make sure you are being heard. And the third is to communicate. You can never overcommunicate in organizations.”

Heidrick & Struggles is a Chicago-based consulting firm that focuses on helping organizations reinvent themselves through improved leadership, teams and cultures.

Listen to the full podcast at **bit.ly/3kOnOpK**





### WAPA names acting administrator

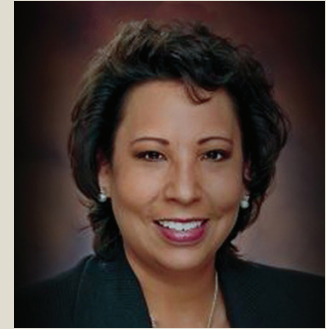
On March 1, WAPA announced **Tracey LeBeau** as interim administrator and CEO, replacing **Mark A. Gabriel** who retired from federal service March 12.

LeBeau has more than 20 years of experience in management, energy development, public-private partnerships, business and organizational start-ups and reorganizations, utility business operations, governmental affairs and energy investment.

Her most recent role at WAPA was the senior vice president and regional manager for Desert Southwest. Before that role, she served as the senior vice president of the Transmission Infrastructure Program and WAPA's chief administrative officer.

"Armed with a deep understanding of WAPA's unique role in the Western U.S., Tracey will continue making tremendous progress in enhancing safety, continuous process improvement and lowering rates," Gabriel said in his announcement. "As executive sponsor of WAPA's Inclusion and Diversity Committee, Tracey brings a broad perspective from multiple lenses."

LeBeau led the Office of Indian Energy as a political appointee during the Obama Administration. Prior to that she was a principal at Dentons, the largest international law firm, and founding cochair of its Renewable Energy Practice.



"It is an honor to serve WAPA in this role as we face ever-present winds of change and opportunity," LeBeau said. "Our core mission is steadfast, as is our commitment to our customers and stakeholders. WAPA has an incredible workforce and we will continue with laser focus on our strategic goals and our core value to learn more and do better."

The Department of Energy will undertake a recruitment and selection process for a permanent administrator and CEO.

### Excused absence for caregiving extended

Excused absence for caregiving for teleworking employees, allowing up to 20 hours of paid leave per pay period, has been extended through Aug. 28.

Supervisors may grant this excused absence for employees who meet any of the following conditions:

- The employee has a child or children who attend an elementary or secondary school that is closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Hybrid learning models to include virtual learning as mitigation measures in response to the pandemic can be considered.
- The employee has a younger child or children who are not of school age and normal childcare arrangements are not available due to the pandemic.
- The employee has other family members, such as an adult child or elderly parent with special needs, in the home who require care or supervision that is unavailable due to the pandemic.



For more information, visit [energy.gov/articles/covid-19-faqs](https://www.energy.gov/articles/covid-19-faqs)



# LEARNING NUCLEUS

### Test Generator retired; use Learning Nucleus

In March, WAPA retired Test Generator. All WAPA employees, including contractors, should now use Learning Nucleus for mandatory training.



All historical training data is being migrated to Learning Nucleus with an expected completion date of May 11. When the migration is complete, seven years' worth of information will be available to employees. Anything older than that will be available by request at [sos@ntc.doe.gov](mailto:sos@ntc.doe.gov).

Learning Nucleus is maintained and supported by the Department of Energy. WAPA does not have any administrative capabilities associated with the program.

Keep an eye on the myWAPA Newsroom for more information and updates.



### Mandatory training due

Be sure to complete the mandatory training that is due for all WAPA federal and contract employees this month.

By May 24, employees must complete both Department of Energy Cybersecurity Awareness Training and North American Electric Reliability Corporation Critical Infrastructure Protection Security Awareness Training.

In addition, by May 29, employees must complete Insider Threat Awareness Training.



Complete these mandatory trainings by visiting Learning Nucleus at [learningnucleus.energy.gov](https://learningnucleus.energy.gov)



### OPM approves increased leave carryover

The Office of Personnel Management issued guidance Jan. 5 to implement the higher annual leave carryover limit established by section 1111 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021. This allows employees assigned to the General Schedule or equivalent pay plan to carry over a higher annual leave balance from the 2020 leave year.

The provision allows:

- Most employees classified at or below GS-15 or equivalent, or classified at or below Level IV of the EJ, EK, EN pay plans, to carry over 300 hours of annual leave into the 2021 leave year, instead of the normal 240 hours maximum carryover amount.
- Employees stationed outside of the U.S. to carry over 450 hours of annual leave into the 2021 leave year, instead of the normal 360 hours maximum carryover amount.

This provision does not apply to employees assigned to the Senior Executive Service or equivalent positions.

For questions, contact your Power Marketing Administration Human Resources Shared Service Center business partner.

